

## **City of Renton 2011 State Legislative Agenda and Statement of Policy Positions**

The City of Renton's 2011 State Legislative Agenda and Statement of Policy Positions are divided as follows:

1. The **2011 State Legislative Agenda includes PRIORITY ISSUES** – items Renton will devote its highest level of advocacy toward achieving. *These are outlined in a separate handout.*
2. The **2011 Statement of Policy Positions – SUPPORT/OPPOSE** – items Renton considers important. The City will use time and effort and join others in supporting beneficial measures or opposing those which would have an adverse impact.
3. The **2011 Statement of Policy Positions – TRACK/MONITOR** – issues the City will track and monitor. As these issues evolve, the City may involve itself to a greater degree if necessary.

## City of Renton 2011 Statement of Policy Positions

### *Criminal Justice/Courts/Jails/Law Enforcement*

#### **SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

- **Anti-Gang-Violence Legislation:** Renton will strongly support 2011 anti-gang-violence legislation being requested by the State Attorney General and supported by a coalition of law enforcement, prosecutors, cities and counties. Renton believes that in addition to penalties, intervention and prevention strategies must be an integral component of any 2011 bill addressing gang violence.
- **Technical fix to ensure “SCORE” jail employees can be under the Public Safety Employees’ Retirement System (PSERS):** Renton will strongly support a 2011 legislative request put forth by the South County Correctional Entity (SCORE), making a technical fix in the law to ensure that SCORE jail employees can participate in PSERS.
- **Protect criminal justice, law enforcement and courts funding:** Renton will work closely with other local agencies, law enforcement organizations and courts organizations to protect operating budget funding for key criminal justice, law enforcement and courts priorities. These include municipal criminal justice, auto theft prevention, law enforcement academy funding, sex offender address verification, public defense and court interpreters.
- **Traffic Safety Cameras – oppose pre-emption of local authority:** Cities expect to see legislation in 2011 that would limit the fines a local government may collect as part of any red-light camera program – and could possibly dictate other operational aspects of the programs. Renton’s program has enhanced traffic safety and reduced collisions. Traffic safety cameras have had an enormous impact on reducing the number of vehicles speeding through school zones. Local trends show that the number of violations occurring at locations with speed safety cameras has decreased by 35 percent. High speed violations issued for exceeding the posted speed limit by 16 to 20 mph have dropped by 42 percent. Renton will join others in opposing pre-emption of local authority and work with other jurisdictions on proposing sensible clarifications of existing law.
- **Vehicle Prowls – Cracking Down on Repeat Offenders:** Renton will support legislation that would increase the penalty for repeat vehicle prowling offenders to a felony. Vehicle prowls are becoming a more significant issue for Renton, particularly given the success the city and others have had in reducing automobile theft.
- **Driving While License Suspended:** Renton will join other law enforcement interests in opposing any 2011 legislation that would seek to completely decriminalize certain types of Driving While License Suspended (DWLS) offenses such as Failure to Appear and Failure to Pay.
- **Funding for medical costs incurred by jail offenders:** Renton will support efforts by AWC and others to obtain assistance.

## TRACK/MONITOR

- **Schools mapping:** Renton will track efforts by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to obtain additional state funding for the mapping of K-12 schools and higher education institutions for emergency preparedness purposes.
- **Requiring Municipal Courts to take on Anti-Harassment Orders (AHOs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs):** If legislation arises to turn this local-discretion authority into a requirement for Municipal Courts, Renton will track it.
- **Weapons restrictions:** Renton will track efforts to enact state restrictions on guns, including safe storage and “closing the gun show loophole.”
- **Fees for offenses that require a DNA sample to be taken – extend authority to Municipal and District Courts:** Current law requires a DNA sample to be taken in connection with certain criminal offenses. Superior Courts have the authority to impose fees that help with cost-recovery for the DNA samples, while District and Municipal Courts do not. Renton will track efforts by the District and Municipal Court Judges’ Association to level the playing field so that all local courts can have cost recovery for DNA sampling.

## *Economic Development/Infrastructure/Parks & Recreation/Housing/Arts & Culture*

## SUPPORT/MONITOR

- **Local Revitalization Financing (LRF) and other Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) types of tools:** Renton has been fortunate to successfully compete for matching state funding of two local economic revitalization projects through the LRF program. Absent state legislative action, the LRF program will not be extended. Renton will strongly support efforts to reauthorize LRF or provide other more robust “TIF” tools.
- **Local Conservation Financing Tool (LCFT):** The City will support efforts by the Cascade Land Conservancy to protect open space and natural areas in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties by creating a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program that generates revenues to local cities to fund infrastructure and other public projects.
- **Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF):** Renton will support efforts by local governments, contractors, water-sewer districts and others to ensure the PWTF can be recapitalized. In 2009, for the first time ever, the Legislature “swept” money out of the PWTF to help resolve a \$9 billion Operating Budget shortfall.
- **Washington Wildlife, Recreation and Parks Program (WWRP):** Renton will strongly support efforts to keep the WWRP program, which is funded out of the State Capital Budget, at a funding level of at least the current \$70 million per biennium. The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC) will actually request \$100 million for the program to take its biennial funding back to the 2007-09 level, but Renton recognizes that will be challenging in this fiscal environment.
- **“Healthy & Sustainable Communities” Initiative:** Renton’s Community Services Department has been involved in the development of a Healthy & Sustainable Communities initiative among representatives of parks and recreation, Realtors, cities and counties, public health entities, the American Heart

Association, the Obesity Coalition, environmental groups and others. The initiative calls for maintained funding of several operating, capital and transportation budget programs such as public health, WWRP, Safe Routes to School that help people stay active and healthy, make more efficient use of the “built environment,” and hopefully help to reverse the obesity epidemic that leads to increased heart disease, coronary problems and diabetes.

- **Affordable housing:** Renton will support initiatives to: a) restore the previously higher funding level of the Housing Trust Fund (HTF), particularly given that the HTF is a likely revenue source for the Sunset Terrace housing project the City is strongly supporting; b) preserve funding for other programs such as the Transition Housing, Ownership and Rental (THOR) program. The Housing Trust Fund helps construct affordable housing, leverages other resources and provides a critical catalyst for investment and job creation that helps stimulate the economy.
- **Permanent revenue stream for “4Culture”:** Renton is working hard to foster a thriving arts and culture community and will support legislation to ensure a permanent, ongoing revenue stream for King County’s “4Culture” organization. The City supports the position of 4Culture and the Washington State Arts Alliance that investment in the arts is an investment in education and helps foster community and economic development. As outlined in Renton’s new Arts & Culture Master Plan, a base of strong arts and culture helps create vibrant communities that connect people across cultural boundaries, attracts tourism, and supports and enhances business retention and recruitment. Since 1993, 16 organizations/artists based in Renton have received over \$570,000 in funding from 4Culture.
- **Farmers Markets and Wine Tasting:** Renton helps support one of the strongest Farmers Markets in the State, with approximately 4,000 people visiting Downtown Renton every Tuesday between June-September. The City supports continued state funding for the statewide Farmers Market network. Additionally, although not currently allowed by City code, Renton supports legislation to permit controlled wine tasting by Washington State wine vendors during Farmers Markets.

## **TRACK/MONITOR**

- **Local Real Estate Excise Tax (REET):** The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) is attempting to negotiate with the Washington Association of Realtors (WAR) an acceptable compromise for 2011 that would enable cities and counties more flexibility in how they spend the first and second quarter percent of their local REET. Renton will track this issue.

## ***Education/Workforce Development***

### **SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

- The City supports fulfillment of the State’s “paramount duty” to fully fund basic education costs including transportation, building and utility costs, fully fund six-period high school days so students can meet graduation requirements within four years, fully fund all-day kindergarten for at risk students, and begin implementation of funding the prototypical school formula components identified by the Quality Education Committee. In 2010, the Legislature approved HB 2261, HB 2776 and SB 6696, which all made important commitments in basic education reform policy. The City supports efforts to follow through with the scheduled funding, while also protecting current education funding.
- The City recognizes that its success increasingly depends on an educated and flexible workforce for all of its employers, public and private alike. Employers need well educated and highly skilled employees

to grow and thrive. Because all students must be prepared to enter the globally competitive workforce, the City supports efforts to adequately fund education reform. The State's investment should:

- Further strengthen accountability – measurable performance should be ensured at all levels of education.
  - Attract and retain quality teachers and address the shortage of educators in the fields of mathematics, science, special education, early learning and bilingual studies.
  - Create a more competitive workforce by expanding funding for FTE enrollment at all levels of higher education and prioritizing offerings toward jobs and industries of the future and high-demand fields.
  - Encourage stronger coordination of workforce development between K-12 and post-secondary education entities and base targets on employer and economic demands.
- **Work Force Development:** Renton supports the “Retooling Washington’s Workforce” initiative embarked upon by the State Work Force Training Board, and is prepared to support 2011 legislative initiatives that grow out of that effort. Relatedly, the City also supports two requests of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)’s, both of which will help forward the City’s goals of retaining and creating jobs and increasing economic opportunity:
    - \$35.1 million (statewide) for Worker Retraining/Incumbent Workers: The Legislature has provided \$28.8 million per year for 6,200 Worker Retraining (WRT) program students/FTEs since 1997. The high unemployment in the current recession has increased demand for this program to record levels – more than 13,000 students/FTEs in FY 2010. The 2010 Legislature responded by providing a one-time addition of \$17.5 million for 3,784 additional Worker Retraining students/FTEs in FY 2010. Demand for Worker Retraining Program slots is projected to stay above 11,000 students/FTEs throughout next biennium. This State Board for Community and Technical Colleges request will maintain the funding level provided in FY 2011.
    - \$31.2 million (statewide) to Restore Basic Skills: This funding will help restore Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs throughout the state. While other mission areas have increased in size, Adult Basic Education -- which serves the fastest growing part of our workforce -- has lost ground as colleges have dealt with three consecutive years of state funding reductions. The colleges responded to state budget reductions in part by consolidating ABE instruction, which has meant closing off-site facilities, reducing evening and weekend hours of instruction, and increasing class sizes. This funding request will help restore access, which is particularly critical at Renton Technical College.

### ***Employee Services Issues/LEOFF/PERS***

#### **SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

- **Oppose pension enhancements that add new costs – and fully fund pension responsibilities:** Renton will follow the lead of the AWC in opposing pension *enhancements* that would add new costs to local governments, while at the same time urging the state to fully fund *existing* pension responsibilities.
- **Reforms to better manage personnel and labor costs:** Renton is prepared to support initiatives put forth by AWC and others to help better manage personnel and labor costs.
- **“Presumptive disease” for police:** Existing state law provides workers’ compensation benefits for firefighters, and families of firefighters, if their disease is presumed to have occurred as a result of the inherently dangerous conditions they faced during their terms of employment. This is defined narrowly within state law. If 2011 legislative initiatives are brought forward to expand the reach of “presumptive

disease” laws to police employees, it will present cost impacts and concerns for Renton. The City will work through AWC in this area.

## TRACK/MONITOR

- **LEOFF 1 retirees:** Renton has some 98 retired LEOFF 1 employees, and 3 active employees who are eligible for the LEOFF 1 retirement program. Like many other cities, Renton continues to seek State assistance in addressing the medical costs for LEOFF 1. Renton will work through AWC in this area.

## *Environmental Issues/Utilities/Water/Stormwater*

### SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Puget Sound Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan:** The City will support efforts by the Puget Sound Partnership and King County Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) to establish dedicated funding to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan.
- **Stormwater Funding:** Renton will support a 2011 Department of Ecology request bill designed to create new financing mechanisms for cities and counties to meet their very costly Clean Water Act requirements under what is known as the National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES). Funding for stormwater is a key to meeting the federally-mandated, state-administered requirements.
- **Water rights fees:** Renton will be closely watching a 2011 Department of Ecology request bill that is designed to increase water rights fees to better fund the water resources program. A concern of water utilities is that the fees will extend beyond *pending* rights applications to *existing* rights, and will be inequitably charged (*for example, draft legislation does not extend the fees to developers of what are known as “exempt wells”*). Renton is prepared to join other utilities in opposing legislation that goes too far in increasing fees and does not equitably extend and charge them to all users.

### TRACK/MONITOR

- **Extending the current “Product Stewardship” program to prescription and pharmaceutical drug disposal:** The Product Stewardship program was enacted by the Legislature as a manufacturer-financed program to allow for the environmentally safe disposal of products such as electronics and lights that contain mercury. King County Solid Waste and others will look to expand the program in 2011 to prescription and pharmaceutical drug disposal. Renton will track these efforts.

## *Fire Prevention and Emergency Services*

### SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Simple Majority for EMS Levies:** Fire Chiefs are expected to bring forth 2011 legislation that would allow Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levies to achieve voter approval with a 50 percent plus one majority, vs. the current 60 percent. Renton will support this issue.

## TRACK/MONITOR

- **Permit incentives for homeowners who voluntarily install fire-suppression sprinkler systems in their residences:** Renton will track this issue.

## *Fiscal Issues*

### SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Oppose unfunded mandates, legislation that erodes local authority and/or legislation that erodes local tax revenue:** This is an annual staple of the City's legislative agenda and directly relates to "basic premises" upon which the annual Legislative Agenda is built.
- **Support legislative changes to help local governments operate more efficiently and reduce costs:** The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) are proposing to the Governor and Legislature a series of ideas to help local governments operate more efficiently, reduce or delay cost impacts or relieve cost burdens altogether. Examples include public records request reforms, notice changes under the State Environmental Policy and Shoreline Management acts; delaying the date by which public fleets must deploy biofuel-powered or electric vehicles; and others. Renton is poised to support these efforts.
- **Oppose countywide utility tax authority and support unincorporated area utility tax:** If King County or the Washington State Association of Counties promotes legislation to establish countywide utility taxing authority, Renton will join numerous other municipalities and the AWC in opposition. A countywide utility tax would result in a "double tax" on city residents who already pay this tax to Renton. However, the city will support a legislative initiative to establish unincorporated area utility tax authority for counties, particularly if a portion of the revenue is dedicated to the transition costs for cities making progress at annexing urban unincorporated areas.
- **Restrict business license authority:** The Washington State Retailers Association may advance 2011 legislation to restrict cities' authority to impose business license fees. If so, Renton will join AWC and others in opposing this local pre-emption effort.

## *General Government*

### SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Protecting bidding laws and contracting authority:** Renton will join other local governments in working to protect local government authority in contracting and bidding laws in 2011.
- **Shifting liability to municipal utilities under the "Call Before You Dig" law:** In 2009, underground contractors sought to add a new definition to the "Call Before You Dig" area of state law, one which would have shifted liability and costs to municipal utilities. An interim work group has been formed, and 2011 legislation is possible. If underground contractors go the same route as they did in 2009, Renton will join AWC and municipal utilities in opposing such a legislative initiative.

## TRACK/MONITOR

- **Expansion of wrongful death and injury claims:** Legislation to expand wrongful death and injury claims against local agencies and the private sector narrowly failed in 2008, 2009 and 2010, and the issue may be re-introduced in 2011. Renton will monitor this issue closely.

### *Growth Management/Land Use and Permitting*

## SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Requiring consistent development standards in PAAs or UGAs:** The AWC may promote legislation in 2011 to require that counties have development standards in Potential Annexation Areas or Urban Growth Areas that are consistent with those in place for neighboring cities. Absent the more direct legislation, an initiative may also require that counties engage in a higher level of joint planning with respect to these areas. Renton will support either or both of these legislative initiatives.
- **Making GMA update cycles more consistent with federal Census updates:** Current law requires that GMA comprehensive plans be updated at least once every seven years. The updates are dependent on accurate population and Census data – and yet Census numbers are updated only once every 10 years. Planning Directors, AWC, and others may advance 2011 legislation to better “harmonize” the timing of these and other required updates. If such legislation is advanced, Renton will support it.
- **Local zoning control over location of mini-casinos:** Renton will support legislation to explicitly clarify cities’ authority to zone the location of mini-casinos and to grandfather in existing zoning restrictions.

## TRACK/MONITOR

- **Timing of when impact fees are collected:** Renton will track legislation likely to be brought forth by the Master Builders Association attempting to require that impact fee collection for residential housing be delayed until the time of sale or closing on the homes.

### *Human and Social Services*

## SUPPORT/OPPOSE

- **Full funding of “2-1-1” system:** Renton will support continued efforts to obtain state funds to help fully fund the new 2-1-1 emergency communications system to help seniors, the disabled and vulnerable populations within Washington State access social services.
- **Public health funding:** Renton will support efforts to preserve funding for Seattle-King County Public Health. A strong public health system promotes a healthier community and prevents and protects against injury and disease.
- **Energy assistance for low-income residents:** During economic down times, the demand for low-income energy assistance rises dramatically. Renton will support state partnership funding for energy assistance for low-income residents.

- **Employment-Based English as a Second Language/English Language Learners (ESL/ELL) Training:** Many employers who are faced with a high rate of job vacancies due to a lack of skilled employees are finding it necessary to consider alternative ways of training existing employees to take on more advanced responsibilities. Employment-Based ESL/ELL training helps workers overcome barriers such as transportation and child care and can lead an immigrant or refugee to English proficiency quicker when using work-based materials. Having employment based ESL/ELL for low-wage working immigrants and refugees can open up new career opportunities that lead them to higher wage employment. Renton has appreciated the Legislature’s recent funding of Renton Technical College’s ESL/ELL workplace-based programs and joins the Renton Chamber of Commerce in seeking ongoing and sustainable state funding for workplace-based ESL/ELL programs.

***Telecommunications***

**SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

- **Oppose statewide franchise fee authority:** In 2009, Verizon approached the Legislature, seeking enactment of a statewide franchising structure for cable and video services. Had the legislation succeeded, it would have pre-empted local franchising authority that guides cable service in Renton and other local markets around the state. If this is proposed in 2011, Renton will join AWC in strongly opposing this attack on local control.

***Transportation/Transit***

**SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

- **Forcing the consolidation of the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board and County Road Administration Board (CRAB):** In 2010, the Governor proposed consolidating the TIB, FMSIB, and CRAB and placing them under the auspices of the WSDOT’s Local Highways Program. Renton believes TIB and FMSIB in particular are two very focused, transparent, accountable and effective agencies and would oppose a forced consolidation. However, the City appreciates and supports the efforts by an interim legislative task force that is reviewing TIB, FMSIB and CRAB operations and how they can increase efficiency.
- **Street Utility:** In 2011, the AWC and a number of individual jurisdictions will seek to obtain legislative authorization to allow cities to establish “Street Utilities” for local maintenance and preservation needs. Renton will support this effort.